



## **Africa RISING West Africa Project Steering Committee Meeting**

**February 4, 2014**

**Bamako, Mali**

### **Minutes of meeting**

**February 2014**



**Present:**

Robert Asiedu, Chair  
Jerry Glover USAID  
Asamoah Larbi, IITA  
Irmgard Hoeschle-Zeledon, Secretary  
Beliyou Haile, IFPRI, for Carlo Azzarri  
Faith Afolabi, IITA  
Farid Waliyar, ICRISAT  
Kehinde Makinde, AGRA

**Absent:**

A.B. Salifu, CSIR, no apologies  
Ousmane Ndoye, CORAF, with apologies

**Observers:**

Agathe Dima, ICRISAT

The meeting started at 08.10am, and ended at 12.30pm.

**Agenda**

08:00 Welcome of PSC members (R. Asiedu, Chairman PSC)  
08:05 Follow up on action points from last meeting (R. Asiedu)  
08:35 Management and implementation issues encountered since last PSC meeting (I. Hoeschle-Zeledon, Project Coordinator; A. Larbi, Chief Scientist)  
09:00 Reflection on stakeholder meeting of previous day (J. Glover, USAID Representative)  
09:45 Discussion and approval of farming systems analysis proposal from Wageningen University; approval of draft annual project budget  
10:00 Break  
10:30 M&E and Project Mapping Tool update (B. Haile, IFPRI)  
10:45 Communications update (F. Afolabi, Project Communication Specialists)  
11:00 Briefing about ESA Steering Committee meeting and PCT meetings (I. Hoeschle-Zeledon)  
11:20 PSC membership (replacement of Africa Rice, new rep from CSIR, Communication, IFPRI)  
11:45 Next activities and upcoming events (I. Hoeschle-Zeledon)  
12:00 AOB  
12:30 End of meeting

**1. Welcome**

The chairman, R. Asiedu, welcomed all the members of the PSC and stressed the importance of the second PSC meeting. The members went to the assessment of the minutes of the first meeting held in Ghana in January 2013.

## **2. Follow up on action points from last meeting**

### **Comments from page 3, Evaluation and Review:**

Zeledon informed that the Program Coordination Team (PCT) they decided to discuss the Program evaluation with the newly formed Scientific Advisory Group. The PSC confirmed that an evaluation of the entire Program would be recommendable to assess consistency across the three projects. There could be different regional evaluation teams. Since field seasons differ from region to region the different teams would carry out the review at different times. For WA Sept./Oct. 2014 was considered most appropriate, Jan./Feb. 2015 for ESA. .

Waliyar mentioned that reviewers' fee will be in the range of US\$300-500 per day.

Asiedu asked if the advisory board had been formed. Zeledon responded that the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) was formally created at the end of December 2013. The date of the first meeting had been tentatively scheduled for March but was postponed. The PCT Chair would follow up with SAG members. It was expected to receive advice from the SAG members at their first meeting on how to carry out the review, identification of reviewers and TOR.

### **Action:**

- Zeledon to consult with PCT for development of ToR and identification of reviewers (next week)
- Zeledon to inform scientists of review
- Waliyar to share ToR of last ICRISAT CCER

### **Comments on communication action points on page 6:**

Larbi informed the members, that a photo journalist came to Ghana in October 2013 and took a large number of photos.

Zeledon said, Kathy Lopez in IITA Ibadan had been acting as the communication officer for Africa RISING WA but is too busy as she heads the Publishing Unit in IITA. That's why Faith Afolabi was recruited as Africa RISING Research Communication Officer for ESA & WA. She resumed duty in November 2013. Being based in Nigeria, she will still rely on IITA communication officers in ESA and on the ICRISAT Communication Officer for Mali and French communication. Larbi said for effective communication coverage of on ground/in the sites events in Ghana it would be helpful to get someone in Ghana as there's a lot to be done. Zeledon, seconded by Waliyar, responded that the project could not afford a communication officer for all countries and suggested the communication officer visit Ghana regularly during the field season. For particular events, a consultant could be hired. Farid confirmed that, Agathe Diama can be of help in Mali even though she has a lot on her schedule for ICRISAT.

Waliyar informed that ICRISAT has an open access policy for data generated by the projects. He emphasized that this is now standard CGIAR policy. However, there is some protection on raw data for a certain time period.

Haile informed that IFPRI is working on guidelines for Africa RISING for data management using the Project Monitoring Tool. These will be circulated to the research teams soon. She

anticipated some differences with the CGIAR open access policy. In her presentation to the meeting she would share more information on what has been done.

Jerry Glover expected the guidelines to include some conditions for use of data generated by Africa RISING scientists. They should not be entirely open but useable by other Africa RISING scientists.

Zeledon informed that there was a template for success stories but not for narrative reports.

### **3. Management and implementation issues encountered since last PSC meeting**

Zeledon presented the following management issues:

- Late submission of work plans for timely submission to SC
- Respect of reporting deadlines
- Poor quality reports
- Acceptance of work plan and reporting templates
- Fund confirmation by donor, reimbursement of 2013 expenditures

Waliyar and Larbi confirmed problems with late reporting by partners and quality of reports. Makinde suggested quarterly meetings with national partners to discuss implementation progress and needs for effective reporting.

Waliyar mentioned late reporting by AVRDC due to mismatching reporting deadlines given by IITA. He also mentioned need to strengthen relationship between partners through joint field visits and activity planning.

Zeledon reported that there was not yet official communication from the donor about fund allocation for fiscal year 2013/14. Glover replied that he was not fully familiar with the funding issues but would talk to E. Witte. Waliyar reminded the meeting that ICRISAT could not depend on annual fund allocation from IITA. However, the letter of intent issued by IITA last year helped and allows for staff recruitment.

#### **Action:**

- Larbi to organize regular meetings with partners and inform them of existing work plan and reporting templates
- Zeledon to adjust reporting deadlines for AVRDC to allow ICRISAT to report timely to IITA
- Makinde will invite Larbi to the review of the DANIDA project
- Glover and Zeledon to talk to Witte to get update on fund release

Zeledon presented several project implementation related issues:

She said that Africa Rice had withdrawn as a partner in Ghana with consent from USAID.

Travel restrictions and ban of funding government institutions in Mali affected work in this country. Restrictions had been removed in October 2013.

She also reminded the SC Member's that the baseline surveys by IFPRI had still not been carried out in any of the two countries. Haile said these would be done in March/April. There had been problems with identifying competent survey firms. Waliyar and Larbi stressed that the science coordinators in the countries should be involved in carrying out the surveys because of their knowledge of the situation. There should be an Africa RISING contact person in Ghana and Mali for the survey firms. The meeting questioned how the data would be handled since the surveys would no longer be baselines but mid-term surveys. Haile responded that they would be an assessment of the status as of now. Since there hadn't been much uptake of technologies yet the surveys would still represent the baseline. Glover remarked that if the project went on for hopefully 10 years it would still be a baseline. Haile said the data will be available by the end of April 2014. She informed that they had problems filling the regional M&E coordinator position and keeping the staff.

Zeledon also reported that the link with the Nutrition Innovation Lab in the USA has been fruitless so far. Larbi reminded that there had been work done over the past 2 years in Ghana and Mali and that should be the basis for further interventions of the project. Zeledon pointed to the previous days' presentation from the Humidtropics CRP and recommended to also focus on dietary diversification instead of other complex research and deliverables which are difficult to measure.

Finally, she reminded the meeting of the growing need to collaborate with other USAID funded initiatives and the difficulties to operationalize this type of partnerships. Makinde recommended looking at what value the partners are bringing and ensuring it's a new and effective initiative. Zeledon said that based on the USAID policy it demands collaboration with other projects. Glover alerted the meeting of some new USAID projects designed to collaborate explicitly with Africa RISING. However, he recognized that this would require further discussions.

#### **4. Reflection on stakeholder meeting of previous day**

Glover expressed his concern about coherence within West Africa. He felt that the Mali component was different from the Ghana component in terms of structure and design. He particularly mentioned that in Mali the work packages were implemented only at one site but not at another. He would like to see more consistency in the research design. He suggested stronger guidance of the researchers by ICRISAT. The quality of data collected by NGOs had to be insured. Waliyar responded that these would be improved with the re-engagement of IER.

Zeledon mentioned that the planned exchange visits to Mali and Ghana should also help guiding the scientists.

Glover and Waliyar saw a need to prioritize the many activities carried out at the moment, after this season.

#### **Action:**

- IFPRI to carry out the baseline surveys in both countries in March/April and provide data to the project end of April
- Larbi and Birhanu to meet and decide on prioritizing activities for future research
- Zeledon and team to organize exchange visits

## **5. Discussion and approval of farming systems analysis proposal from Wageningen University; approval of draft annual project budget**

Zeledon gave a brief description of the Wageningen University proposal for the next step of the farming systems analysis. This proposal suggests the involvement of two African PhD students to contribute to capacity building in Africa. She informed that there was an open advert for potential candidates to apply and selection would be done jointly by Wageningen and IITA. The meeting recommended that one student should be placed in each region (WA and ESA) and their studies should be limited to the region to avoid too much travelling. The responsibilities of supervisor should be clear between Wageningen University and Africa RISING scientists. The meeting approved the proposal.

### **Action:**

- Larbi to post advert in universities in Ghana next week
- Zeledon to clarify supervision and placement of students with Wageningen

Zeledon also presented the draft WA project budget. This was approved by the Steering Committee.

## **6. Update on M&E and Project Monitoring Tool**

Haile reported that IFPRI was working on a data management protocol for data to be uploaded on the Project Monitoring Tool. It will be shared with Zeledon and Thorne who should review it. Glover reminded the meeting that if the projects would not come up with some kind of good data management USAID would impose a system on us. Data would not have to be perfect. There should be a sufficient description of the data so that they could be understood.

The discussion went around questions like robustness of data, minimum standard data requirement, and protection. Haile said any type of data could be uploaded on the online platform. She added that the website would make it possible for researcher to upload the data themselves.

### **Action:**

- IFPRI to share the draft protocol; Zeledon and Thorne to provide feedback
- IFPRI to recruit data manager for helpdesk
- Scientific Advisory Group to assist in defining minimum data set

## **7. Communication update**

Afolabi gave a brief background on the goal and objectives of Africa RISING communication and went through the challenges faced in communication in the project; she gave a brief on the

work plan scheduled for the year in WA and ESA. She stressed the importance of team leaders submitting their calendar of activities for the year so as to be abreast of activities. For coverage of activities in Mali, Agathe will provide support. Makinde suggested exploring interface with private sector for information dissemination, and providing forum for stakeholders to provide feedback.

**Action:**

- Add logos of IER and CSIR on the WA partner power point slide

## **8. Briefing about ESA Steering Committee meeting and PCT meetings**

Zeledon briefed the steering committee about major decisions by the ESA Steering Committee and the Program Coordination Team, particularly on the need for branding guidelines, gender strategy and the establishment of a Scientific Advisory Group. The branding guidelines have been developed and disseminated. They are part of all new agreements and available on the wiki. The Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) has been formed in December 2013. Dates of first meeting with the PCT are not yet fixed. The PCT is working on a gender strategy based on the Humidtropics strategy. Glover informed that the gender specialist in USAID gave feedback to the PCT. Waliyar also recommended to compare with ICRISAT's strategy and ensure eventually implementation of the Africa RISING strategy.

**Action:**

- Review of Humid tropics (and ICRISAT) gender strategy by PCT until next PCT meeting in March/April

## **9. Steering Committee membership**

Zeledon informed about the change in representation of CORAF from Ernest Asiedu to Ousmane Ndoeye.

She informed the house that the vacant seat for the CGIAR centers needed to be filled. The group decided to offer it to AVRDC for the period until end of September 2015.

She also suggested to the group to accept Haile as the representative of IFPRI as she is regularly attending on behalf of Azzarri.

Afolabi was presented as the new communications officer replacing Lopez on the Steering Committee.

The meeting decided to invite IER to the steering committee.

Zeledon reported the non-responsiveness of the CSIR representative.

**Action:**

- Zeledon to send invitations to AVRDC and IER (with help from ICRISAT)
- Zeledon to inform IFPRI of change in membership
- Larbi to meet with CSIR Director; Zeledon to follow up with a letter

## **10. Next activities and upcoming events**

Zeledon presented a timeline for finalization of work plans and approval. She also informed about a planned exchange visit to Tanzania, the need for submission of a regional log frame, write-ups of scalable technologies, and a project document for the project reviewers.

**Action:**

- Work plans should be submitted by 15th March 2014 to Project Coordinator
- Steering Committee will review and eventually approve work plans by 31 March
- New agreements will be issued by 15 April
- ICRISAT to look for alternative partner if ICRAF does not accept available budget
- Larbi and Bekunda to agree dates for scientists' exchange visit to Tanzania in April
- Write-ups of scalable technologies by May, these should be systems technologies not single technologies
- Larbi to lead project document development, liaise with Birhanu, circulation of first draft in April
- Annual learning event to be organized in Arusha in September in connection with the ESA annual Review and Planning meeting; suggestions to Zeledon for WA participants

## **11. AOB**

Zeledon reported that at the learning event last September Larbi was tasked to lead a team to draft a list of sustainability indicators. He circulated the list to Bekunda in ESA and Zeledon for feedback. The following discussion focused on how to ensure good integration of all partners at the same sites, particularly when CGIAR partners are not physically present and sub-contract NARS and let technicians implement the activities.

**Action:**

- Larbi to ensure conceptual integration and linkages of work packages at the sites in Ghana; ICRISAT to be part of all platforms in Mali; request first contractors to inform sub-contractors on strict adherence to sites and activities; regular monitoring meetings (physical and virtual) to ensure subcontractors implement activities as agreed (Birhanu, Larbi)

## **12. End of meeting**

In his final remarks, the Chair thanked everyone for their inputs and closed the meeting at 12:30 p.m.

Ibadan, 20 February 2014  
I. Hoeschle-Zeledon  
Secretary,  
PSC Africa RISING West Africa Project